



March 31, 2016

Casa Valentina



Casa Valentina is a sensitively written offbeat love story clothed in the Catskills, a lovely and secluded setting in upstate New York. The tale is set in the early 1960's when men had not yet come out of the closet, let alone go inside to put on a dress and a pair of high heels.

What makes *Casa Valentina* so wonderful are

the raw performances, the ironic twists and the peeling away of layer after layer of conformity, morality and psychology until, left naked in their own skins, these men reveal the hidden women inside. One woman, whose life will be forever changed, seeks solace from the scorn and scowls of the outside world.

Valerie Mahaffey, Raymond McNally, James Snyder and Christian Clemenson are standout as part of a motley crew of misfits whose lives intersect at a resort designed to appeal to the fashion sense of the cross-dresser. Here, they seem to fit like comfy slippers. But when certain truths are revealed and the pain that living falsely brings is brought into the moonlight, the result is exquisitely painful.

Harvey Fierstein wrote the play for Broadway but it had a very short run in 2014. The play has a lot to say about what love is and how even longstanding friendships are fragile. The story is based on an actual resort named Casa Susanna that existed to give cross-dressing men a place to feel safe.

All good things must end, and when they do, during a drunken spree, each character is left clinging to the void that comes from feeling different and misunderstood. For our brothers, fathers, sisters and friends who lived quiet lives of frustration, guilt and shame before society was ready to acknowledge all the colors that we are, I am glad that at least for a time, a haven such as this existed. *Casa Valentina* is at the Pasadena Playhouse until April 10th. Check in and see for yourself.

